

## Deon Senchina

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**From:** Jenny Leeper [jleeper@cfu.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 05, 2012 1:39 PM  
**To:** 'Deon Senchina'  
**Subject:** FW: Update  
**Attachments:** November 2, 2012 Board Update.doc

Dee: How would you suggest we respond, as board members, to Mike's China item in this week's update? Though, as we've discussed, I support the concept, I'm not in support of us pursuing this program this year. In addition, I feel we need to provide additional district support than has currently been mentioned (versus parent/volunteer-led organization and planning) in order to ensure this is a viable, sustainable and safe program for our students to be a part of. Didn't know if you and Joyce were going to relay this message on behalf of the entire board – or if you think it would be beneficial to provide Mike with individual feedback. Let me know... thanks.

Jenny

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**From:** Mike Wells [mailto:mike.wells@cfschools.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 05, 2012 12:31 PM  
**To:** Dave Williams; Deon Senchina; Jenny Leeper; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon; Joyce Coil; Susan Lantz; Dave Williams; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon  
**Subject:** Update

I received an e-mail from Joyce this morning that she didn't get the board update on Saturday. I'm not sure what happened so I am resending. Please let me know you got it. Hope all is going well. Thanks.

Mike

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Jenny Leeper&lt; jleeper@cfu.net&gt;

## Update

Jenny Leeper&lt; jleeper@cfu.net&gt;

Thu, Nov 8, 2012 at 12:49 PM

To: Mike Wells &lt;mike.wells@cfschools.org&gt;

Mike: I wanted to share my (evolving) thoughts regarding the China Exchange program. Though I do support the concept of the program, I'd prefer we take this off of this year's "plate" and reconsider it next year, for the following reasons:

- Priority-based: As we've discussed as a board/superintendent team, our high-priority items for this year are (in no particular order, at least for me) PLCs, Leader in Me, Technology and HS facility plan (bilingual plan could be added to that list, but I feel more urgency about those first four). In my mind (and from my experience in my time here in CF), these are HUGE goals that will take all of our focus to reach consensus, make progress and find success. I'm in favor of putting a lot of the good (but not urgent) ideas on the back burner, securing some big successes in these high-priority goals this year... then returning to the good idea list and reprioritizing those ideas again next year.
- Format of exchange program: Coming from the parent side, I'm not yet comfortable with the Ws (who, what, when, where, why, how) of this exchange program. Again, in my experience in CF, parents are very overloaded with volunteer requests and requirements, whether they be from the schools, athletics, community organizations, etc. My concerns are:
  - Sustainability: If we are going to support the program as a district, I feel we need to provide a very specific, organized and extensive framework for all the details of the program – rather than rely on parents to figure it out on their own. I'm not sure that I support the district just being the facilitator of the process, but not being involved in the process. I believe that's asking too much of our parents.
  - Involvement of student population: If the district doesn't develop the Ws of the program and leaves much of this burden to our parents, I'm fearful that it will limit those students who end up taking advantage of this program. If parents are having to shoulder this program, I see it being a very limited portion of our population that will participate (which, I understand it will likely be anyway)... for instance, if my child was already involved in lots of extracurricular activities, I likely would not even consider the exchange program as there would little chance my family would have the time to dedicate to this project. So while we might reach some kids who aren't involved in much at school (and though engaging this population is great), I'd prefer we assured this program was a benefit to our entire student population, if they so chose.
  - Safety: This is probably my biggest concern. Unless we go to great lengths to ensure the program is set up to provide a safe travel experience for our students and adult chaperones, I would not be comfortable with this being a district-supported

program. To gain the district "seal of approval," I'd like to see that all details are spelled out and researched from start to finish for both parts of this exchange. Even if you and Rich were to visit China this school year, I do not anticipate we would be ready to initiate this exchange this summer (at least in terms of the parameters I'd like to see met). I will freely admit I'm an overprotective mom who always sees the danger inherent in a situation (ask Brad my opinion of him encouraging our kids to pillow surf down our staircase) – so, unfortunately, I can think of lots of scary scenarios that could develop were we not adequately prepared to launch this program.

I hope my comments come across as they are intended – supportive, but cautious. In light of our district going through so much change this year, I just don't feel now is the best time to pursue the China project. I'd also be interested in getting some parent feedback on this program so we can determine if this is even something that would be of interest to our student population. This would be a huge commitment for our families – so I think it's important for the board to know whether or not there are enough families to ensure sustained interest (rather than a one-year-and-done deal). I wonder if maybe the initial phase (if the Chinese are wanting to send students to the U.S. "now") couldn't come through the city – maybe the city can find host families in the community (who don't necessarily have to have kids in the district) for the Chinese students, then we can learn more about the process as these kids are here in our community? Just another evolving thought... thanks for your consideration and see you soon.

Jenny

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**From:** Mike Wells [mailto:mike.wells@cfschools.org]

**Sent:** Monday, November 05, 2012 12:31 PM

**To:** Dave Williams; Deon Senchina; Jenny Leeper; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon; Joyce Coll; Susan Lantz; Dave Williams; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon

**Subject:** Update

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Mike

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Jenny Leeper &lt;jleeper@cfu.net&gt;

**Courier Article**

3 messages

**Mike Wells** <mike.wells@cfschools.org>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 7:14 AM

To: Dave Williams <dave.williams@cfschools.org>, Deon Senchina <deon.senchina@cfu.net>, Jenny Leeper <jleeper@cfu.net>, Jim Brown <jim.brown@cfschools.org>, Jim Kenyon <james.kenyon@cfschools.org>, Joyce Coil <joyce.coil@cfschools.org>, Susan Lantz <susan.lantz@cfschools.org>, Dave Williams <williams@cfu.net>, Jim Brown <jimbrown@cfu.net>, Jim Kenyon <gocatsgo@cfu.net>, Carrie DeBerg <Carrie.DeBerg@cfschools.org>

This mornings Courier has an article on the Chinese Exchange program. The article is well written and positive. The Chinese Exchange program is a community committee and will have an organizational meeting on December 18th.. Both the Mayor and a councilman will be helping this become a reality. A committee of parents will be in charge of organizing it. I will send an update out after the meeting letting you know the interest level. Just FYI.

Mike

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**Jenny Leeper** <jleeper@cfu.net>

Mon, Dec 17, 2012 at 7:05 PM

To: Mike Wells &lt;mike.wells@cfschools.org&gt;

Mike: I wanted to let you know that I'm a bit taken aback after reading the Courier article as well as the brochure for the exchange program. I'm extremely uncomfortable with the prominence with which the district appears in relation to this program – particularly considering the board remains (to my knowledge) united on the opinion that this is something that is not a district priority and is a program we are not comfortable pursuing or supporting as a district.

I'm not sure we're on the same page in terms of any district representative playing a major role in this exchange program... my understanding was that the city would take this project on, if they so chose, and the school would not play a part. By having the superintendant featured so prominently in the launching of this initiative, I feel it lends credibility to the program (which I don't feel has been earned yet) and gives the false impression to parents and community members that we, as a district, fully support and give our stamp of approval to this project. I remain unconvinced that this program has been researched enough or that a sustainable implementation plan has been developed.

Honestly, I'd prefer that the meeting not be held at the high school, that we weren't "advertising" the program over morning announcements and that we do not have any district representatives involved... that said, I'm not sure where the rest of the board falls on this issue.



Either before or after the winter break, I'd like to find a time to meet to discuss some things before the January work sessions get underway... may be that it's too busy pre-Christmas, so maybe post-break is better? Not sure what your calendar looks like.

Thanks for considering my thoughts and, if I don't see you before, have a great Christmas break.

Jenny

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**From:** Mike Wells [mailto:mike.wells@cfschools.org]

**Sent:** Friday, December 14, 2012 7:15 AM

**To:** Dave Williams; Deon Senchina; Jenny Leeper; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon; Joyce Coil; Susan Lantz; Dave Williams; Jim Brown; Jim Kenyon; Carrie DeBerg

**Subject:** Courier Article

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**Mike Wells** <mike.wells@cfschools.org>

Mon, Dec 17, 2012 at 9:59 PM

To: Jenny Leeper <jleeper@cfu.net>

Jenny,

I would be happy to meet with you and discuss this. It's not a school event, it's a community program. I can meet this week if you have time. Better yet, attend the meeting tomorrow night and listen to the presentation. We make it very clear that it is not a school sponsored event. It's part of the sister city exchange. I'm not trying to put the school in a bad spot. This is a great opportunity for our community. Let me know what works for a meeting.

Mike

[Quoted text hidden]



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Williams Dave &lt;williams@cfu.net&gt;

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**Courier Article**

4 messages

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**Mike Wells** <mike.wells@cfschools.org>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 7:14 AM

To: Dave Williams <dave.williams@cfschools.org>, Deon Senchina <deon.senchina@cfu.net>, Jenny Leeper <jleeper@cfu.net>, Jim Brown <jim.brown@cfschools.org>, Jim Kenyon <james.kenyon@cfschools.org>, Joyce Coil <joyce.coil@cfschools.org>, Susan Lantz <susan.lantz@cfschools.org>, Dave Williams <williams@cfu.net>, Jim Brown <jimbrown@cfu.net>, Jim Kenyon <gocatsgo@cfu.net>, Carrie DeBerg <Carrie.DeBerg@cfschools.org>

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**Williams Dave** <williams@cfu.net>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 1:38 PM

To: Mike Wells &lt;mike.wells@cfschools.org&gt;

Good article. I'm glad there is a councilman involved, although I think his knowledge of China may be somewhat limited. I guess that doesn't really matter if he is able to deliver a credible project. I found the following link while looking for the Chinese Exchange program on line. It might be interesting to talk to the folks mentioned.....

[http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/digging-through-to-china-from-cedar-falls/article\\_a2adf00c-af60-5726-974a-2900bd7f15ec.html](http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/digging-through-to-china-from-cedar-falls/article_a2adf00c-af60-5726-974a-2900bd7f15ec.html)

A friendly "heads up"...this was in last night's Courier, ie, not this morning's Courier. That means the news got out before you told us. By comparison, I think you did tell us about the high school article before it appeared in the paper. "Day after" timing is fine with me, but I can't speak for others.

Looking forward to seeing you Monday at 3 in your office to discuss finance basics.

Have a great weekend...

dw

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Mike Wells** <mike.wells@cfschools.org>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 1:53 PM

To: Williams Dave &lt;williams@cfu.net&gt;

Dave,

I was a presenter at Iowa School Leadership Conference for the past two days so I didn't know about the article until I looked at the pile of papers this morning. I will try to stay on top of the articles and let you guys know BEFORE they come out.

Mike

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**Williams Dave** <williams@cfu.net>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 2:15 PM

To: Mike Wells <mike.wells@cfschools.org>

Mike - Like I said, the day after timing is fine for me. You can't be two places at the same time. Also, please note that I had no suggestions on how you would be able to always let us know before they come out. It appears that this article could have come out any day this week, or a subsequent day. Parfents got an email about the info meeting IRCC, so you weren't depending on the paper to get the word out.

I'm just a little concerned that others might make an issue of the ticky-tack point that it was last night's paper, not this morning's paper.

Have a great weekend.

dw

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## Deon Senchina

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**From:** Jenny Leeper [jleeper@cfu.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 17, 2012 7:20 PM  
**To:** 'Deon Senchina'  
**Subject:** China

Dee: I copied the text of a message I sent to Mike re: the China program. I will also forward you a message I received from, I think, the high school that links to the brochure on the program – it's hard to find the city's role in the brochure, as Mike appears to be the main contact and organizer in the brochure content. I've asked him if we can meet either before or after break... ugh. Not sure where my head is at with all of this... at this point, I'm really wondering whether we should move forward with the high school work sessions until we've resolved things with the midyear review? In my mind, the ultimate resolution options create a lot of "if this, then that" scenarios – which play out very differently in terms of how we move forward.

One question I did have before the review... how do we (or do we) consider the feedback from the admin council, key administrators and/or staff in forming our opinions of the job performance thus far? I didn't know if those were conversations that take place? If not, I guess I'm unsure as to how we measure goals such as collaboration within the cabinet, etc.

Thanks for any insight you can offer... and have a good night.

Jenny

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